

WHAT AFFECTS THE RISK FOR ADDICTION?

Many factors can increase—and decrease—a person’s risk for becoming addicted to alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs.

Risk factors can increase the chance of addiction. They include biological factors, such as certain genetic variants, and environmental factors, such as friends who use drugs.

Protective factors can decrease the risk for addiction. They include strong family bonds or friends who are a good influence.

A person with more risk factors and fewer protective factors usually has a greater chance for addiction. However, a person with few risk factors can still become addicted. And most people who are at high risk never become addicted. Study the table to the right to learn some risk and protective factors for addiction.

Directions: Study the table. Then use this information along with facts from the article “How Do Genes Affect Addiction?” to answer the questions at the bottom of the page. Write your answers on separate paper.

Risk and Protective Factors for Addiction



RISK FACTORS

- Family history of addiction
- Lack of parental support
- Lack of strong family bonds
- Friends or family who use alcohol, tobacco, or drugs
- Availability of drugs
- Drug use during adolescence
- Mental health problems such as depression
- Stress
- High-risk gene variant
- Exposure to trauma or violence



PROTECTIVE FACTORS

- Strong family bonds
- Parental involvement
- Friends who are a good influence and don’t do drugs
- Strong community
- Anti-drug policies at home and in school
- Strong school performance
- Participation in after-school activities
- Having strategies to cope with stress
- Low-risk gene variant

QUESTIONS:

1. Explain the difference between a protective factor and a risk factor for addiction. Give one example of each.
2. Suppose a person has no family history of drug addiction and has strong bonds with his or her parents. Is it guaranteed that the person will not develop an addiction? Support your answer with evidence from the text.
3. Suppose a person has a strong genetic history of addiction. Give three ways the person can reduce his or her own risk.